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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PARIS 002827

SIPDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (CHANGED SUBJECT)

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PGOV FR LE UNSC PREL

SUBJECT: U/S BURNS' JULY 13 MEETING WITH SARKOZY DIPLOMATIC ADVISOR JEAN-DAVID LEVITTE

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Classified By: Ambassador Craig Stapleton, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (U) June 13, 2007, 3:00 P.M.

¶2. (U) Participants:

U.S.

Under Secretary Burns

Ambassador Stapleton

Political Minister-Counselor Rosenblatt

P Staff Bame

Poloff Waller (notetaker)

France

Amb. Jean-David Levitte, Diplomatic Advisor to the President

Francois Richier, Counselor for Strategic Affairs

Damien Loras, Counselor for the Americas

¶3. (C) SUMMARY: In a meeting that centered on Kosovo, Lebanon and Iran, U/S Burns: locked in a French commitment to join the U.S. in recognizing Kosovo's independence if an additional four to six months of dialogue fails to produce a breakthrough; expressed disappointment with France's failure to consult Washington before launching FM Kouchner's Lebanon dialogue initiative; urged the French to carefully select the dialogue's participants; noted the need to address the divergence in U.S. and French views on Hezbollah; and urged Levitte not to reward Syria until Damascus took positive actions in the region. He welcomed France's decision not to reduce its military commitment in Afghanistan and encouraged the French to establish a PRT. He delivered a particularly strong message on the need to get serious about sanctions against Iran. In response, Levitte said President Sarkozy was maintaining "exactly the same line" on Lebanon as Chirac, albeit with the "nuance" of no longer being allied with "one family" (i.e., the Hariris). Levitte said Sarkozy had not decided whether to proceed on a dialogue with Syria; Levitte promised to call Burns as soon as a decision is made. He emphasized that France wants to see a change of Syrian behavior, but not of the regime. On Afghanistan, France will likely not establish a PRT, although a final decision hasn't been taken; Sarkozy is looking for other ways to make quick, visible contributions to reconstruction. On Iran, Levitte agreed on the need for unofficial sanctions, but said that "it would be disastrous" for Congress to sanction European companies doing business with Iran. END SUMMARY.

Kosovo

¶ 4. (C) Burns noted that the Secretary was prepared to move forward on the basis of President Sarkozy's proposal for renewed dialogue, provided that the EU would join with Washington in supporting Kosovo's independence at the end of that dialogue if the parties remained polarized. Burns then reviewed next steps, including what to do if Russia continued to refuse to engage at the UN.

¶ 5. (C) In turn, Levitte sketched four possible scenarios. The best case, he said, would be for the new UNSCR to pass with Russia's support, but this clearly would not happen. The next best outcome would be to pass an alternative resolution that paved the way for renewed negotiations between the parties (while leaving the ultimate outcome vague), with a Russian abstention. The third best scenario would be to abandon the effort to pass a new resolution at this time, and instead move directly to renewed negotiations.

¶ 6. (C) Finally, Levitte said it was imperative, from a European perspective, not to push the Russians into a veto that would destroy the international legal basis for Kosovo's independence and for the French and other foreign military presence there. "Our worst-case scenario would be to act illegally after a veto," said Levitte, insisting it would be better to proceed without a new resolution at all than to proceed over Moscow's veto. He added that France's legal advisors were creative enough to cobble together a justification for recognizing Kosovo's independence on the basis of existing UNSCRs.

¶ 7. (C) Burns pointed out that the U.S. did not necessarily agree that a Russian veto would be a "worst case scenario," but reaffirmed Washington's willingness to move forward on the basis of the Sarkozy proposal in order to remain united. Burns said he wanted to make sure he understood Levitte's position clearly: If the additional negotiations failed to produce an agreement, would France find a way to recognize Kosovo's independence? "Yes, absolutely," said Levitte, who

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indicated that he would prepare a note for President Sarkozy in order to get his approval in writing. He characterized Sarkozy's position as "everything is negotiable so long as Kosovo achieves independence in the end." Levitte predicted that, of the other EU states, Germany and Spain would be the most difficult to bring along.

Lebanon

¶ 8. (C) Turning to Lebanon, Burns said it would have been nice to have known of Kouchner's plans for a national dialogue in advance. Levitte dodged by saying he believed Ambassador Emie had taken care of that. Levitte added that "Sarkozy is maintaining exactly the same line (as Chirac) with one slight nuance: France will no longer be linked exclusively to one family or clan."

¶ 9. (C) Warming to this theme, Levitte said that France "was traditionally the friend of all of Lebanon's citizens," not of any given community. Consequently, the French would not try to divide Lebanon's complex society into "good Lebanese" and "bad Lebanese."

¶ 10. (C) The passage of UNSCR 1757 has put Damascus in a corner, Levitte continued. Syria sees a last chance to escape by creating chaos in Lebanon, both to prevent the election of a new Lebanese president and to bring the Brammertz investigation to a standstill "because Lebanon will be such a mess." Syria has given huge quantities of arms to Sunni extremists as well as to Hezbollah, turning Lebanon into a powder keg waiting to explode. Our joint goal, Levitte purred, is to do whatever we can to stop the chaos. France does not imagine that FM Kouchner's proposed dialogue will solve Lebanon's problems, but hopes that it will restore

dialogue. Paris will invite participants to think about "the future of the Lebanese state -- how can we make it work?" Levitte confirmed that Hizballah would be represented, albeit at a low level.

¶11. (C) Inasmuch as France appeared determined to proceed with FM Kouchner's dialogue initiative despite U.S. reservations, Burns noted that some of the names floated as prospective participants would be inappropriate. He urged Levitte to ensure that the right Lebanese were invited to participate in the dialogue. He also underscored that the U.S. and France have differing views of Hizballah, and suggested that Levitte be briefed by Israeli Deputy Prime Minister Shaul Mofaz on the capabilities of Hizballah's Iranian-supplied missiles. Levitte said he would meet Mofaz soon. Burns noted the need to refrain from taking actions that might strengthen Hizballah, as well as the need to cooperate on the renewal of UNIFIL's mandate and to tighten control of the Syrian-Lebanese border.

Syria

¶12. (C) On Syria, Levitte said France seeks a change of behavior -- on Lebanon, terrorism and Iraq -- but not regime change. The French message to Damascus is simple: Syria can have five more years of Chirac (i.e., no dialogue) or, change its policy and enjoy five years of Sarkozy (i.e., dialogue).

¶13. (C) Burns urged that France not reward Damascus until the Syrians take positive action. Levitte agreed, and stressed that Sarkozy has not yet decided whether to proceed. "We'll have a dialogue with Syria only if we think it will help to calm down the situation in Lebanon and avoid an explosion," said Levitte. In any event, he assured Burns that the French would be transparent with Washington. "I'll call you as soon as a decision is taken," Levitte promised. (NB: This exchange took place before news of the assassination of Lebanese MP Walid Eido reached either party.)

Iran

¶14. (C) Burns informed Levitte that there appeared to be little hope that Iranian nuclear negotiator Ali Larijani would accept suspension. U/S Burns and French MFA PolDir Gerard Araud would therefore exchange proposed elements for a third UNSCR. U/S Burns noted that while a third and perhaps even a fourth UNSCR would be good for the sake of unity, they would likely prove insufficient to bring the Iranians to the negotiating table. It was therefore critical that the EU and Japan consider more meaningful sanctions outside of a UN context. Much more could be done to restrict commerce and export credits. U/S Burns emphasized that if the world

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wanted tough diplomacy to succeed (in lieu of a military option), then it was time to get serious on sanctions.

¶15. (C) Levitte said it was important to have a third sanctions resolution as soon as possible. "We should not assume that Russia and China will water it down; let's be ambitious and they may surprise us," he said. He voiced his complete agreement on the importance of voluntary economic sanctions, and noted that French banks had reduced their ties to Iran by over 50 percent in the past twelve months. He predicted that number would continue to shrink in the months ahead. He also noted that the French energy giant Total has decided against pursuing any major investments in Iran at this time. He said France was prepared to consider further options, but said it was important not to publicly discuss such possibilities so as not to undermine the case for additional UNSC sanctions. "Let's be efficient but discreet," said Levitte.

¶16. (C) Levitte said it would be "a disaster" if Congress

were to impose sanctions on European companies doing business with Iran. Burns assured him that the Administration's position was that sanctions should be targeted against Iran and not against Europe, but he acknowledged that the political pressure on the Hill for tougher measures was real.

Afghanistan

¶17. (C) Levitte emphasized that, as Sarkozy had already informed President Bush, the new French government would not reduce its military presence in Afghanistan and would instead increase its training efforts by deploying an additional 150 embedded trainers to assist the Afghan army. "We'll stay (in Afghanistan), we'll remain engaged, and we'll show solidarity with our allies," said Levitte. He added that President Sarkozy has tasked his advisors with developing a menu of options for making a concrete contribution to Afghanistan's reconstruction. Burns seized the opportunity to encourage France to lead a PRT, noting that France was the only NATO member not participating in a PRT. Levitte did not completely rule out the possibility, but emphasized that Sarkozy preferred to take a sector-based approach to reconstruction rather than a geographic approach. The new French President wants options for doing something "quick and visible" in a field where the French could make a difference and demonstrate their value-added (e.g., using a French NGO to build a modern hospital).

Sarkozy Visit to Washington

¶18. (C) Levitte said that Sarkozy hoped to visit Washington on September 26, and that he would welcome an opportunity to address the Congress.

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